

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PANAMA 04982 171642Z

42

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 SP-02 PM-04

NSC-05 SS-15 L-03 /049 W

----- 051643

O R 171547Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8471

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 4982

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, MILI

SUBJECT: TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: (A) PANAMA 4939

(B) PANAMA 4981

1. FOREIGN MINISTER BOYD INVITED ME TO HIS OFFICE TODAY (FRIDAY) TO DISCUSS SERIES OF QUOTE INCIDENTS UNQUOTE WHICH HAVE BEEN PLAYED UP IN NEWSPAPER CRITICA IN RECENT DAYS. STORIES HAVE ALL CONTAINED WILD DISTORTIONS AND ERRORS AND HAVE SEEMED DELIBERATELY CALCULATED TO AROUSE PASSIONS OF PANAMANIAN AGAINST ZONE AUTHORITIES, US MILITARY AND THIS EMBASSY.

2. BOYD BEGAN BY SAYING THAT HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT RASH OF RECENT INCIDENTS WHICH HE FELT WERE EXACERBATING U.S.-PANAMA RELATIONS AND PLAYING INTO HANDS OF EXTREMISTS. HE SAID THAT AS I KNEW WE WERE QUOTE SITTING ON A POWDERKEG UNQUOTE AND HE WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT SOME INCIDENT COULD SET OFF CONFLAGRATION. HE THEN CITED THE INCIDENTS: (1) THE RECENT CASE OF TWO PANAMANIAN STUDENTS WHO WERE APPREHENDED IN ZONE COMMISSARY WITHOUT PROPER IDENTIFICATION (SEE REFTEL B). STUDENTS WERE TRIED IN ZONE COURT, ADMITTED THEIR GUILT AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PANAMA 04982 171642Z

WERE FINED FIFTEEN DOLLARS EACH. A FEW STUDENTS AND NEWS

PHOTOGRAPHER FROM CRITICA WERE EXPELLED FROM SCENE FOR CREATING DISTURBANCE AND CAMERA FILM WAS CONFISCATED FOR UNAUTHORIZED USE IN COURTROOM. (2) CASE REPORTED IN TODAY'S CRITICA IN WHICH A ZONE LAWYER ALLEGEDLY TRIED TO ENFORCE ZONE COURT ORDER TO COLLECT FURNITURE FOR HIS CLIENT IN A DIVORCE ACTION FROM A HOUSE IN PANAMA. (3) RECENT WILD STORY IN CRITICA ALLEGING THAT US PLANES DIVED AT AND FIRED ON GUARDIA NACIONAL TROOPS NEAR HOWARD AIR FORCE BASE. LATTER INCIDENT REPORTED IN DETAIL IN REFTEL A AND OTHER TELEPHONICALLY TO ARA/PAN. BOYD ALSO REFERRED TO RECENT INCIDENT IN WHICH GUARDIA MEMBER IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES WAS ARRESTED FOR SPEEDING ON FOURTH OF JULY AVENUE. INCIDENT PRODUCED MINOR CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ZONE POLICE AND GUARDIA WHO WERE SUMMONED TO SCENE. IN ALL THESE CASES, BOYD BASED HIMSELF ON MISINFORMATION CONTAINED IN NEWS STORIES AND ON ERROR-FILLED REPORTS FROM GUARDIA SOURCES.

3. WHEN LONG RECITAL ENDED, I TOLD MINISTER THAT I, TOO, WAS CONCERNED WITH THESE VARIOUS INCIDENTS WHICH COULD PROVOKE UNWANTED REACTIONS. BUT I SAID I WAS LESS WORRIED ABOUT INCIDENTS--WHICH WERE OF MINOR NATURE AND OCCURRED FREQUENTLY IN THIS COMPLICATED SITUATION--THAN I WAS ABOUT WHAT APPEARED TO BE CLEARLY PROVOCATIVE PRESS CAMPAIGN BASED IN MISREPRESENTATIONS AND LIES AND WHICH COULD ONLY HAVE AS ITS PURPOSE THE AROUSING OF PASSIONS AMONG GOOD PANAMANIAN PEOPLE AND AMONG AMERICANS AS WELL.

4. I THEN TOOK UP THE INCIDENTS HE HAD MENTIONED ONE BY ONE. IN THE CASE OF THE STUDENTS (FULL REPORT IN REB. B), I NOTED THAT OUR ACTION WAS BASED ON AN OBLIGATION IN THE TREATY OF 1955 AND THAT THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT HAD INSISTED THAT WE STRICTLY ENFORCE RESTRICTIONS ON THE ACCESS OF PANAMANIAN TO PX'S AND COMMISSARIES. VIOLATORS ARE APPREHENDED REGULARLY AND RECEIVE THE SAME TREATMENT. IT WAS CLEAR TO ME THAT THE PRESENCE OF OTHER STUDENTS AND PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS DEMONSTRATED THAT A PROVOCATION HAD BEEN PLANNED AND CARRIED OUT.

5. IN THE SECOND CASE, I NOTED THAT THE CENTRAL FIGURES WERE BOTH EMPLOYEES OF THE CANAL ZONE WHO HAD GONE TO THE ZONE COURT TO FINALIZE THEIR MUTUAL AGREEMENT ON PROPERTY SETTLEMENT IN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PANAMA 04982 171642Z

CONNECTION WITH A DIVORCE ACTION. I SAID IT WAS CLEAR TO THE JUDGE--A VETERAN OF MANY YEARS EXPERIENCE IN THE ZONE--AND TO ALL OTHERS CONCERNED THAT A ZONE COURT FINDING OR ORDER CARRIES NO POWER OF ENFORCEMENT IN THE REPUBLIC. IF THERE WAS ANY ERROR IT APPEARED TO BE THE RESULT OF A DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DIVORCED COUPLE AND PERHAPS THE OVERZEALOUSNESS OF ONE OR BOTH LAWYERS.

6. AS FOR THE INCIDENT OF THE MILITARY FLIGHTS NEAR HOWARD (SEE REFTTEL A), I NOTED THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE BACKGROUND THAT THE MINISTER HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN. THE PILOTS WERE PRACTISING LANDINGS AND TAKEOFFS. THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT (THROUGH THE DIRECTORATE OF CIVIL AVIATION) HAD BEEN INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF THE FLIGHT PLANS. INVESTIGATION SHOWED THAT NO FIRING HAD TAKEN PLACE. MOREOVER, I SAID, AS SOON AS WE WERE INFORMED THAT GUARDIA FORCES WERE IN THE AREA--WHICH THE PILOTS DID NOT KNOW BEFORE OR DURING THEIR TRAINING EXERCISE--THE FLIGHTS WERE STOPPED. WE HAD EXPLAINED FULLY THE CIRCUMSTANCES TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF AND G-3 OF THE GUARDIA. BOTH ACCEPTED THE EXPLANATIONS AS SATISFACTORY AND REGARDED THE MATTER AS A QUOTE MINOR MISUNDERSTANDING UNQUOTE.

7. THE MINISTER RECEIVED ALL THIS IN GOOD GRACE AND THANKED ME FOR THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. IT WAS OBVIOUS HE WAS HEARING THE FACTS FOR THE FIRST TIME AND HE SHOWED SOME EMBARRASSMENT AS A RESULT. I THEN REPEATED MY OPENING REMARK--THAT MY MAIN CONCERN AT THIS TIME WAS NOT THE FACT THAT MINOR INCIDENTS OCCURRED. RATHER IT WAS THAT A NEWSPAPER CONTROLLED BY THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD USE SUCH INCIDENTS IN A DELIBERATELY MISLEADING AND PROVOCATIVE WAY. SUCH SENSATIONAL TREATMENT OF MINOR MATTERS COULD HAVE ONLY ONE PURPOSE: THE DELIBERATE INCITEMENT OF EMOTIONS AND ANTAGONISM BETWEEN PANAMANIAN AND AMERICANS. I URGED HIM AND HIS GOVERNMENT TO TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO CURB THIS ABUSIVE TREATMENT BY A SMALL SEGMENT OF THE PRESS. HE ASSURED ME HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD.

8. AT THE END OF OUR CONVERSATION, WHICH WAS RESTRAINED AND FRIENDLY THROUGHOUT, THE MINISTER SAID HE REMAINED CONCERNED BY THE OBVIOUS ANTAGONISM THAT SEEMED TO ERUPT REGULARLY BETWEEN POLICEMEN OF THE GUARDIA AND MEMBERS OF THE ZONE POLICE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PANAMA 04982 171642Z

FORCE. I ASSURED HIM THAT I WOULD CONSULT WITH MY COLLEAGUES IN PANCANAL AND SOUTHCOM AND REQUEST THEM TO URGE THEIR POLICEMEN TO ACT WITH RESTRAINT AND COURTESY IN DEALING WITH ANY PANAMANIAN, ESPECIALLY WITH MEMBERS OF THE GUARDIA NACIONAL.
JORDEN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, MILITARY AIRCRAFT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, ALLEGATIONS, ARRESTS, STUDENTS, THREATS, POLICE FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: blochd0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PANAMA04982
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760276-0745
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760747/aaaabpgv.tel
Line Count: 159
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 PANAMA 4939
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: blochd0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUL 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUL 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <28 OCT 2004 by blochd0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
TAGS: PFOR, MILI, PN, PQ, US, (BOYD GUARDIA, AQUILINO EDGARDO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006